Nutrition Education Grab and Go Lesson

How to Use Arts and Crafts to Teach About Food and Eating

Many nutrition education activities include arts and crafts that teach about food and eating.

**Plan age-appropriate activities.**
Arts and crafts activities require use of *fine motor skills*. This means that children must use their fingers and hands to handle the objects. The ability to do this depends on the age and level of development of the child. Younger children are not able to do the same kinds of activities as older children. Since children want to be successful, it is important for you to plan activities that are appropriate for the age and skill level of each child.

**Help children learn through hands-on activities.**
Like adults, children learn by doing. They enjoy the process of creating. Most arts and crafts activities can be changed as needed to make them developmentally appropriate for different children.

- All preschool children like to scribble and color. Older children will spend more time on a coloring or drawing activity. All children feel a sense of accomplishment with creative work and enjoy taking projects home to show parents or guardians.

- Activities that require pasting, stringing items, or other fine motor skills may require some help from an adult. Let children do as much of the activity as they can by themselves.
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- If children are not able to handle all tasks of an activity, the caregiver may be able to do some of the steps of the project ahead of time. For example, cut out pictures in advance so that they will be ready for young children to paste.

Make it more than just an activity.
Make it a nutrition education experience by relating the activity to learning about foods and how foods are important to health. You can do this
- when you introduce the activity and
- as you talk with the children during the activity.

Use the CARE Connection grab-and-go lesson, *Steps to Planning a Nutrition Education Activity*.

Use everyday materials for arts and crafts.
Arts and crafts projects do not have to be expensive. Plan to use simple materials that you have around the house.
- Collect clean, empty food boxes, such as cereal and oatmeal boxes.
- Collect bits of string and yarn to enhance projects.
- Add a few drops of food color to inexpensive paste.
- Cut colorful pictures of fruits, vegetables, and other healthful foods from magazines.

Look at some of the *Fun Food Activities for Children* in the Nutrition Education section of the CARE Connection Curriculum for more great ideas.